

**U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services Office
Western District of New York
Position Description**

Job Title/Classification Level	Special Offender Specialist CL 29
Occupational Group	Professional Line

Job Summary

By statute, the probation/pretrial services officer serves in a judiciary law enforcement position and assists in the administration of justice and promotes community safety, gathers information, supervises offenders/defendants, interacts with collateral agencies, prepares reports, conducts investigations, and presents recommendations to the court. Officer specialists manage a caseload that includes a significant proportion of offenders/defendants of a specialized type and serve as local experts on cases of this type. The Special Offender Specialist performs duties that involve high-risk issues, such as mental health treatment, substance and/or alcohol abuse, sex offenses, computer-related crimes, and financial (white collar) crimes or cases with location monitoring conditions. Intensive supervision is often required for high-risk offenders/defendants. Probation and pretrial services officer specialists must carry at least a 50 percent caseload, spending at least 50 percent of their time working with defendants and/or offenders. Officer specialists may guide the work of probation/pretrial services officer assistants and other staff.

Representative Duties

- Perform investigative and supervision responsibilities for a caseload of high-risk and/or specialized needs offenders to maximize adherence to imposed conditions, reduce risk to the community and to provide correctional treatment. These high-risk and/or specialized cases include but are not limited to offenders having severe substance abuse, mental health and/or re-entry concerns. This caseload could potentially include sex offenders and location monitoring if needed.
- Responsible for coordinating and assisting in the development of outcome driven strategies identifying risks, needs, treatment, and implementing specific interventions that have demonstrated success in reducing recidivism.
- Enforce court-ordered supervision components and implement supervision strategies. Maintain personal contact with offenders through office, home, and community contacts to monitor general compliance with release conditions. Investigate employment, sources of income, financial documents, lifestyle, and associates to assess risk and compliance. Address substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence, and similar problems and implement the necessary treatment or violation proceedings, through assessment, monitoring, and counseling. Interview victim(s) and provide victim impact statements to the court.
- Analyze and resolve disputed issues involving offenders and present unresolved issues to the Court for resolution. Assess offenders' level of risk and develop a blend of risk management strategies for controlling and correcting risk. Stay abreast of most recently developed evidenced based practices (EBPs) and use consistently in supervision strategies. Train line officers in EBPs and encourage their use.
- Installation and monitoring of applications to investigate all activity on the computer, automated services, or connected devices owned or operated by offenders. Schedule and conduct drug use detection tests and DNA collection of offenders, following established procedures and protocols. Conduct surveillance and/or search and seizure as deemed appropriate per policy. Responsible for enforcement of location monitoring conditions ordered by the court.
- Conduct investigations, prepare written reports, and make recommendations for the court in high-risk and/or specialized cases by interviewing offenders and their families and collecting background data from various sources. An integral part of this process is the interpretation and application of policies and procedures, statutes, Federal Rules of Criminal Procedures, and may include U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, Procedures Manuals, and relevant case law in the area of specialization.
- Communicate with other organizations and persons (such as the U.S. Parole Commission, Bureau of Prisons, law enforcement, treatment agencies, and attorneys) concerning offenders' behavior and conditions of supervision. Identify and investigate violations and implement appropriate alternatives

and sanctions. Report violations to the appropriate authorities. Testify at court or parole hearings. Conduct Parole Commission preliminary interviews.

- Serve as a resource and expert to the court, line officers, and staff in high-risk and/or specialized cases. Guide, advise, train, and make recommendations to other officers, the court, and other individuals regarding issues relating to the area of specialization. Train line officers on identification and treatment of offenders with high-risk and/or specialized needs.
- Participate in on-going training and educational opportunities to further develop and/or enhance techniques and skills relating to investigation and supervision practices of offenders in area of specialization. Track developments in the law. Provide the court, management and staff with ongoing updates related to changes with this offender population. Assist in developing policies to provide needed services. Provide proposals/recommendations for updates or amendments to conditions of supervision for this special offender population.
- Perform administrative duties regarding area of specialty.

Factor 1 – Required Competencies (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities)

Probation, Pretrial Services, and Law Enforcement

- Knowledge of the roles and functions of the federal probation and/or pretrial services offices, including knowledge of the legal requirements, practices and procedures used in probation, parole, and/or pretrial services. Knowledge of the roles, responsibilities, and relationships among the federal courts, U.S. Parole Commission, U.S. Marshals Service, Bureau of Prisons, U.S. Attorney's Office, Federal Public Defender's Office, and other organizations relating to area of specialization.
- Knowledge of resources, policies, procedures, and protocols in managing cases involving high-risk and/or specialized cases. Knowledge of evidence-based practices. Skill in supervising offenders/defendants with specialized needs/situations. Ability to provide guidance to line officers, the court, and other agencies regarding area of specialization. Knowledge of *U.S. Sentencing Guidelines* and related appellate case law.
- Knowledge of investigative techniques and skill in investigating offenders'/defendants' backgrounds, activities, finances, and determining legitimacy of their income. Knowledge of the *Bail Reform Act*. Knowledge of negotiation and motivation techniques.
- Knowledge of how other judicial processes and procedures relate to the officer's roles and responsibilities. Knowledge of federal law and the criminal justice system particularly as it relates to federal probation and pretrial services in the area of specialization, and parole policies and procedures. Knowledge of surrounding community and available community resources.
- Knowledge of sentencing guidelines, statutes, *Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure* and applicable case law. Ability to apply changes in the law as appropriate. Knowledge of techniques in supervising offenders/defendants who are high-risk or have specialized needs. Skill in supervising offenders/defendants with specialized needs, risk assessment, and developing appropriate alternatives and sanctions to non-compliant behavior.
- Skill in conducting legal research related to varied, complex, and difficult legal issues while supervising offenders/defendants. Skill in analyzing and summarizing legal concepts and issues. Skill in legal reasoning and critical thinking. Skill in dealing with violent and/or difficult people. Skill in counseling offenders/defendants to maintain compliance to conditions of their release. Ability to follow safety procedures. Ability to discern deception and act accordingly.
- Ability to compile and summarize information (such as background checks and criminal histories) within established time frames.
- Ability to organize, prioritize work schedule, work independently with little or no supervision, and to exercise discretion. Ability to work under pressure of short deadlines.

Judgment and Ethics

- Knowledge of and compliance with the *Code of Conduct for Judicial Employees* and court confidentiality requirements. Ability to consistently demonstrate sound ethics and judgment.

Written and Oral Communication/Interaction

- Skill in communicating (orally and in writing) and working with judges, attorneys, other law

enforcement agencies, and correctional agencies. Ability to interact and communicate effectively with people of diverse backgrounds, including law enforcement and collateral agency personnel at different government levels, community service providers, and offenders/defendants. Ability to interview and establish rapport with contacts at collateral agencies, offenders/defendants and their families/support systems, and others for the purpose of supervision and investigation.

Information Technology

- Skill in the use of automated equipment including mobile devices, word processing, spreadsheet, and database applications, and various other types of software. Ability to utilize computer software and automated systems to perform record checks, record urinalysis results, compile criminal history information, and similar activities. Ability to learn and adapt to changing technologies related to supervising offenders/defendants. Skill in interpreting and analyzing data from a variety of investigative databases.

Factor 2 – Primary Job Focus and Scope

The primary focus of the job is to fulfill statutory requirements to conduct pretrial and pre-sentence investigations, supervise offenders/defendants, make recommendations to the court, evaluate needs and conditions, and maximize compliance for the purpose of ensuring community safety. A proper recommendation to the court maximizes the protection to the public. Society benefits from successful supervision and the use of detention alternatives by saving the costs of incarceration. Incumbents' work assists officers and the court by developing programs for defendants and offenders with specialized needs which help ensure appearance at future court hearings and/or proper sentencing. Proper sentencing minimizes the number of incarcerations while maximizing the protection of the public. The specialized programs developed and managed by Special Offender Specialists aid judicial officers in making decisions concerning the offender's/defendant's specific needs. Successful management of special needs benefits the offender/defendant, family members, employers, and others in the community.

Factor 3 – Complexity and Decision Making

The job involves making independent decisions within the context of professional standards, broad policies, and general goals. Incumbents gather and analyze information to determine or recommend the best course of action. Management of defendants with specialized needs is in itself complex and often controversial. Recommending a specialized approach or making program referrals, often over the protests of the defendant, is difficult. Staying abreast of developments in the specialized area adds to the complexity of the position. Incumbents require minimal supervision in most areas. Incumbents have discretion in developing, implementing, and evaluating programs as they relate to the area of specialization.

Factor 4A – Interactions with Judiciary Contacts

The primary judiciary contacts are other probation and pretrial services staff, judicial officers, peers in the field of specialization, staff of other court units, the Administrative Office, and the U.S. Sentencing Commission for the purpose of conducting research and investigations and maintaining accurate, up-to-date information in case files.

Factor 4B – Interactions with External Contacts

The primary external contacts are offenders/defendants and their families, other government agencies, U.S. Attorney's Office, U.S. Marshals, Bureau of Prisons, Parole Commission, attorneys, public safety/law enforcement officials, treatment providers, victims, and other members of the community for the purpose of investigating offenders'/defendants' background, obtaining and verifying arrest information, drafting sentencing guidelines, and similar activities. Special Offender Specialists also have contact with drug and alcohol treatment professionals, mental health professionals, and home confinement equipment vendors for the purpose of providing specialized supervision of offenders/defendants. Frequent contacts with service providers ensure quality of service.

Factor 5 – Work Environment and Physical Demands

Work is performed in an office setting and in the community and may be subject to variable hours, including nights and weekends. Work requires regular contact with persons who have violent backgrounds. These contacts may be made in both generally controlled office settings as well as in field situations (such as uncontrolled and unsafe neighborhoods/environments where illegal activities and violence may occur). The duties of probation and pretrial services officers require the investigation and management of alleged criminal offenders or convicted offenders who present physical danger to officers and to the public. In the supervision, treatment, and control of these offenders, these duties require moderate to arduous physical exercise, including prolonged periods of walking and standing, physical dexterity and coordination necessary for officer safety, and use of self-defense tactics.